1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[ARCHERS]

After giving birth, the mother keeps her infant in the shade of her hut for three or four days, receiving visits from admiring neighbors. The infant is protected by various charms and amulets attached to its elbow and wrist. It is fed whenever it cries. When the mother does leave her hut, carrying the infant on her back, she protects it from the sun by covering it with a leaf. When it is bigger she carries it without a supporting sling, either on her hip or on her back. The child is always with her, and she devotes her spare time to playing with it and singing to it. Even when dancing she may carry it in a sling at her side. 846 854 [789] [853] [535]

The child is taught to walk almost as soon as it is big enough to be allowed on the ground alone. This process is sometimes hastened by scratching its knee and placing a fast-moving beetle (*pakalakala*) in the blood, then allowing it to run away. Soon, the mother believes, her child will be running as fast as the beetle. 856 • [825]

Breast feeding is continued for about a year; sometimes a child continues to be breast fed while it is able to run about the camp. But from a few weeks after its birth it is introduced gradually to vegetable foods. 853

Fathers, although Schebesta writes that they do not like to be bothered with infants, help their wives in the care of children and even attend to their personal needs. 854 855 593

[P. 178-D]

2: Turnbull E-S (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

846 751 juice that when cut they have to be bent, with both ends upward so that the liquid will not be lost. Sometimes they are cut into chunks and soaked in water that is used for washing the infant.

856 A third precaution that is taken is to tie a vine bracelet around one of the infant's wrists, or around his waist. A small piece of wood may be roughly threaded to the vine, and the stated function is again to give the infant strength, except that with specific reference to the wood, it is frequently said that it "gives the child the strength of the forest."

844 845 778 With regard to preferences among the women as to where they give birth, it varies. But there is unanimity that if there is any difficulty at all, then the right thing to do is to go off away from the camp and into the forest, which will "help." The forest appears quite 778 clearly as helper and protector in the vine and wooden medicines and 795 charms, and in the scarification that will take place at the first sign 851 of sickness. Even with adults this is done: the skin is cut in a number [856] of small slits with an arrow, and some of the flesh is gouged out. The ashes prepared from forest woods and plants are made into a paste with spittle and rubbed into the wounds. When the skin grows back, the black ash is still visible beneath, and is regarded as a source of the strength and health and happiness that derive from the forest.

846 Both parents are under food restrictions until the baby is old enough to crawl, the main one and the only general one being that they must not eat meat. The father may go hunting, but any meat that falls into his net is divided among the others. More often he stays away from the hunt, sending his net out with some youth. However, somewhere between one and two months after birth, and when the family net has made a particularly successful catch, the father will usually announce that he is eating meat again.

853 The only other restriction placed on the nuclear family by the crisis of birth is the restraint placed on the father, who is forbidden to have sexual intercourse with the mother as long as she is breast-feeding 853 the child. The restriction is quite definitely linked by the Mbuti to 845 the supply of milk, which is also given as the reason for their rather mild aversion to twins. I know of no record of twins who both survived into adulthood, and it is stated that one of them invariably [847] dies. It is also stated that no woman would feed a child at each breast, and I understand that if twins are born, one is simply not fed by the mother, and is taken away and buried by her friends. But there is no fear of twins, and no ritual in connection with their birth or death.

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
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Finally it may be remarked that whereas in many African societies, including those of the neighboring villagers, birth fixes the social position of an individual through the structural ramifications of kinship, among the Mbuti it achieves the same end, to a less fixed degree, by placing the individual in a specific age group and relating the infant to a specific locality. The child might not be reared in that locality, but the fact will remain valid as a claim to band membership throughout his or her life. Adoption is often agreed upon in order that a child, or even an adult, may return to his natal band, regardless of what kin remain to him there.[1]

It will also be noticed that in the absence of the magical and supernatural protections that are sought for a newly born child among the villagers nearby, there is a lack of concern with the possibility of disaster, and only a concern that the child should be strong. Insofar as this strength is conveyed by washing the baby with the juice of forest vines, tattooing it with forest ashes, and binding it with forest symbols, this may be regarded as sympathetic magic. But it is better regarded as the beginning of a lifetime of close intimacy between the Mbuti and the forest, an intimacy that may or may not give the physical strength it is believed to convey, but that is undoubtedly responsible for the cohesive social strength found in this one omnipresent, omnipotent symbol of Mbuti unity, the forest.

The absence of formal ritual protection and of the invocation of supernatural aid and attention at birth is the first clear indication that for the Mbuti the norm is the good, and that this goodness derives directly from the forest, physically and spiritually. Although birth is primarily the affair of the nuclear family, all members of the band share the pleasure and the pride of the parents, concern themselves with the welfare and education of the child according to the functions of the different age groups, but they do not see that it is necessary to make of birth what we might here call a "spiritual" occasion. In referring to childbirth the men and women alike say, simply, that "it is the work of women, it is what they are for." There is nothing abnormal about the event, nor is there any expectancy of danger or complication, and so the band does not see that it is necessary to intervene with a formal religious festival.

[1] See Table 11 for examples of adoptions of boys and girls among net-hunters.